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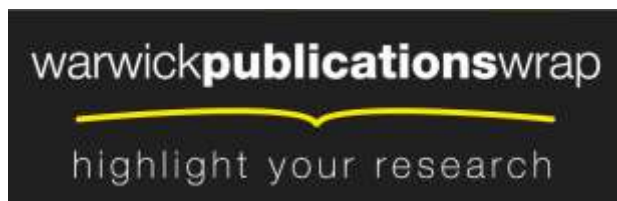
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A sociological dilemma: Race, segregation and US sociology

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Abstract

US sociology has been historically segregated in that, at least until the 1960s, there were two distinct institutionally organized traditions of sociological thought – one black and one white. For the most part, however, dominant historiographies have been silent on that segregation and, at best, reproduce it when addressing the US sociological tradition. This is evident in the rarity with which scholars such as WEB Du Bois, E Franklin Frazier, Oliver Cromwell Cox, or other ‘African American Pioneers of Sociology’, as Saint-Arnaud calls them, are presented as core sociological voices within histories of the discipline. This article addresses the absence of African American sociologists from the US sociological canon and, further, discusses the implications of this absence for our understanding of core sociological concepts. With regard to the latter, the article focuses in particular on the debates around equality and emancipation and discusses the ways in which our understanding of these concepts could be extended by taking into account the work of African American sociologists and their different interpretations of core themes.

Keywords

Booker T Washington, WEB Du Bois, epistemology, racism, segregation, settler colonialism, US sociology

I

Postcolonial analysis and critique has usually been directed at an examination of the relations between nations and societies following the dismantling of formal systems of colonialism and empire. Its remit has included not only the need for a proper understanding

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of formerly colonized societies, but also a need to rethink the historical narratives associated with the colonial period, especially in their continuing impact on framing the way in which we think about the world today. In this context of examining relations of hierarchy, domination and the inclusions and exclusions that they create, postcolonial analysis is further directed towards the complex social stratifications created through colonial rule. This has usually involved a focus on the relations between the historically colonial metropole and periphery or the relations between newly established elites and long-standing subaltern populations within formerly colonized countries.

It has been less common for postcolonial analysis to be directed back at the former national metropolises to examine the impact of colonization on what is more usually represented as internal and endogenous forms of social stratification in the dominant country. This is so despite the fact that colonialism was also a feature of the very rise of nation-states that typically provide the focus for dominant national sociologies. Indeed, the nation-state form itself can be regarded as a product of colonialism and not just a product of nationalism (including national oppositions to colonialism). This is as true of those countries that became purely national states through the loss of their colonies and thus imperial status, as it is of those that secured their independence through decolonization struggles. In the former case, the lack of attention given to alternative traditions of thought within the metropole has tended to elide the colonial past and drown out other voices, with the consequence that those who were subject to colonial domination are rendered absent or insignificant to what are presented as national traditions (see Bhambra, 2009). These issues are exacerbated in settler colonies where colonial modes of governance are domesticated and indigenous voices and histories displaced and silenced.

The United States, which is the focus of this article, occupies a somewhat peculiar position within these debates (see Cook-Lynn, 1997; King, 2000; Singh and Schmidt, 2000). This is, in part, a consequence of its self-conception as the first 'new nation'; that is, a nation that itself had seceded from a colonial power and was forging its own destiny free of the encumbrances of history and tradition. In particular, it sought to distinguish itself from the historical weight of Europe's past, including the forms of colonialism and empire that characterized European powers and, as such, defined its territorial expansion westwards in terms of an understanding of 'manifest destiny' and the creation of an 'empire of liberty' (see Roediger, 2008). Such an understanding is only possible to the extent that the internal forms of stratification created through the transformation of the landmass into the United States of America – that is, through the historical processes of violent dispossession, displacement, enslavement and domination – are effaced, and continue to be effaced, from dominant accounts. The US may be a 'new' nation, but its newness does not reside in its distance from colonialism. Rather, this is based on the large-scale dispossession, displacement and genocide of native peoples and the enslavement of Africans who were transported there to work on plantations. As such, 'European' coloniality is inscribed at the very heart of the United States and it cannot be understood adequately without taking this into account.¹

A key concern of this article, then, is the relationship between race, segregation and the epistemology of social science, in particular of sociology within the United States. My interest is in examining how the long-standing tradition of Black sociology with its substantial challenge to commonly accepted norms of sociological knowledge has been

effectively displaced from standard histories of the discipline such that even the challenge mounted in the 1960s has been largely forgotten. The focus on the African American tradition here is not to suggest that there have not also been other significant contestations of the hegemonic forms I am addressing. There have. Not least, there has been the challenge by Native Americans, as Cook-Lynn argues, to ‘almost everything that America has to offer in education and society’ (1997: 25). The truth is, she suggests, that the marginalization of Native Americans and Native American studies has much to do with the continuing existence of colonial structures and practices that deny the principles of being indigenous and of indigenous sovereignty to such an extent that there is no possibility of rapprochement without a fundamental transformation of (ideas of) society and nationhood. Understandings of equality and desegregation within social science epistemologies, with which this article is concerned, can be seen to be of less significance to Native American scholarship which has understandings of pre-existing sovereignty, nationhood, treaty and indigenous rights as more central.² These issues will be taken up in future work.

In making my argument in this article, I examine the politics of canon formation generally, before looking more specifically at the way in which this plays out in the context of the history, and historiography, of US sociology. The second half of the article considers the place of African American sociology in the canon and the way in which it enables us to reconsider key conceptual debates within sociology, with a particular focus on debates around emancipation and equality.³ The central argument of this article is as follows: to the extent that disempowerment is constituted, at least in part, through mechanisms of exclusion from the sites of institutional knowledge formation and dissemination, exclusion from the canon and, more importantly, from the processes of canon building is key to understanding the dominant politics of knowledge production current within the academy.

II

While celebratory narratives of the emergence of the US dominate standard historiography, they have not gone unchallenged. The 1960s, in particular, saw the theory of internal colonialism applied to the United States with regard both to the condition of race relations there as well as the ways in which race was understood epistemologically, that is, in terms of thinking through the racialized politics of knowledge production of the US academy. These debates, which had begun much earlier, brought together the structural analyses of, largely, African American sociologists and activists within the Black Power movement. The tradition of sociology inaugurated by WEB Du Bois in the first half of the 20th century provided a significant challenge to dominant understandings of race, and of race relations, in the United States (see Ladner, 1973; Rabaka, 2010; Saint-Arnaud, 2009; Wilson, 2006). In particular, Du Bois (1909) contested sociological arguments that sought to explain the unequal conditions within which African Americans found themselves in terms of a postulated biological differentiation of races. Instead, he argued for race to be understood as a social issue. That is, as a problem located in the configuration of relationships between people; in issues of poverty, degradation, systematic oppression and segregation, including also the institutional segregation of

educational establishments.⁴ He was followed in this line of reasoning by scholars such as Charles S Johnson (1934) and E Franklin Frazier (1947, 1968 [1955]), who argued that it was impossible to understand the contemporary position of African Americans in the US without locating this within an historical analysis beginning with dispossession, enslavement and the plantation system.

This historicization of racial oppression within the US was further located within a theoretical paradigm of 'internal colonialism' as articulated by scholar-activists such as Huey Newton, Stokely Carmichael and Charles V Hamilton. Carmichael and Hamilton (1969) argued that, while the analogy of 'internal colonialism' was not perfect, it did nonetheless describe the objective position of Black people in the United States. Further, it pointed to and clarified the need for both political and epistemological decolonization and self-determination. White sociologists such as Robert Blauner and David Wellman concurred and argued themselves for the decolonization of social science research such that it could 'contribute to the larger anticolonial dynamic' (1973: 330) necessary for the eradication of institutional racism within the United States (see also Bloom and Martin, 2013: 269–287; Jeffries, 2002). Blauner and Wellman, however, were in a minority among white sociologists. The majority failed adequately to address issues of race in the US or to make space for discussion of such themes within sociology departments in historically white universities (see Steinberg, 2007).

This failure led to demands by groups such as the Black Panther Party and the Third World Liberation Front for the creation of Black and ethnic studies programmes to address the condition of African Americans and others (see Bloom and Martin, 2013; Patil, 2014). While the creation of these programmes and departments established academic space within historically white universities for the discussion and investigation of issues of race, at the same time, however, it also had the consequence of isolating the study of race from more general consideration. This meant, for example, that the discipline of sociology within these same institutions did not necessarily have to engage with arguments made by Black sociologists or from the traditions of Black sociology which were located in these other departments.⁵ This was not a necessary consequence, but rather stemmed from the continued failure of (mostly white) sociology to engage with the scholarship on race by other (mostly Black) scholars. In this way, the broader critique identifying the racialized epistemology of the dominant version of the social sciences was again displaced. Such epistemological exclusions continue to be of issue and are, in part, a consequence of processes of canonization which are continually reproduced.⁶

As Kermode (1985) argues, canons have never been wholly impermeable or immune to change, but contestations in the late 20th century over the integrity of 'the canon', particularly in the humanities, have been highly charged. Discussions regarding the formation or constitution of the canon rarely revolve simply around the reputation of individual authors and the case, or not, for their inclusion. Rather, for some (Bennett, 1984; Bloom, 1987), the canon is seen to be the ground upon which the value(s) of 'western civilisation' is/are to be defended against the questioning, by others (Morrison, 1989: 1–2), of its 'whitemale' origins and definitions. The self-appointed custodians of the humanities (and, thus, Western civilization) centre their arguments around issues of quality, the maintenance of standards and the inculcation of shared values, arguing further for aesthetic objectivity and universality in the face of potential politicization. This expressed

fear of the politicization of cultural values and aesthetics occurs, however, with little recognition of canon formation as something that has always been political. The objectivity that people such as Bennett and Bloom call for is an objectivity grounded in the decontextualization of the high canon of Western literature from the social and political conditions of its emergence and subsequent perpetuation; the conditions, for example, of colonialism, dispossession and enslavement. While the debate around the canon has been somewhat different in the social sciences, the establishment of particular disciplinary histories, I will go on to argue, performs a similar function.

A canon, in contrast to a classic, is a collective noun denominating a plural but determinate group of works or authors which necessitates a clear demarcation between privileged insiders and neglected outsiders (Weinsheimer, 1991). The formation of a canon is generally regarded as the outcome of a collective (cultural) process where, as Kermode suggests, it is possible to make additions and exclude simply by appearing to follow a conversation (1985: 75). The predictable furore around any suggested changes to the canon, however, should alert us to the fact that determining canonicity is not simply a matter of persuading others of the merits of particular authors or texts. The collective processes of intellectual engagement and contestation through which canonical status comes to be ascribed is simultaneously complemented by, and could be argued to be constituted through, the historical configurations of social relations that enable and obstruct the participation of particular others at any given time (Guillory, 1987). Following Hartsock's (1987) general criticism, that we are not all in a position to participate as equals in a conversation, it is particularly important also to acknowledge the consequences of such historical inequalities. Absence from the canon, as Toni Morrison notes, does not imply an absence of processes associated with exclusion; rather, it should cause us to interrogate the intellectual manoeuvres that are required to erase peoples from histories and societies 'seething' with their presence (1989: 12). The silence of the Black experience within canonical literary texts is amplified by the absence of Black authored texts within the canon. Through a discussion of these absences, Morrison illuminates her proposition that whereas the literary canon appears 'naturally' or 'inevitably' white, in fact, it is 'studiously' so (1989: 14). The canonization of a particular disciplinary history for sociology demonstrates a similar commitment.

The hundredth anniversary of the American Sociological Association (ASA), the professional association for sociologists in the United States, fell in 2005 and was the occasion for the organization of an edited volume on its history. While the volume, in the words of its editor Craig Calhoun, does not aim 'to cover everything' or to offer 'exhaustive documentation or narrative integration', it does seek to provide a sociological history of the discipline through 'a broad and diverse range of contributions' (2007: xiii). In producing a book that was not simply the history of the Association, but presented as 'the centennial history of sociology in America' (Calhoun, 2007: xi), it can be regarded as a canonical statement of the history of US sociology. As such, it offers a valuable insight into how the discipline presents and represents its history. What is immediately striking is the limited address of the broader historical context within which this disciplinary history is itself located. Apart from the three chapters that focus explicitly on race, hardly any of the other chapters address the racially segregated context – including segregated educational institutions – within which US sociology emerged and developed, either in

its own terms, or as significant for the telling of the history of US sociology.⁷ Instead, the majority of chapters focus on the historical traditions of white sociology and devolve these, in their representations, to the historical traditions of sociology generally. By refusing to acknowledge the racially segregated nature of the history that they are narrating, these scholars rearticulate that segregation for contemporary times with the only chapters making the broader historical point also being chapters that address issues of race. This is in contrast to the way in which 'gender' figures within the volume. While I would not suggest that the volume presents a feminist history of US sociology, it does, nonetheless, more extensively address issues of gender across the various chapters and discusses the gender exclusions that were existent at the time of sociology's beginnings as an important aspect of how we think about the history of US sociology. In this way, race continues to be segregated as a 'topic' within sociology and there is little discussion of the way in which race has structured and continues to structure the sociological enterprise.

The exclusions of race and the history of racial segregation, and the failure to analyse the history of US sociology in this context, come in a variety of forms. For example, Neil Gross in his chapter on pragmatism and 20th-century sociology mentions that Robert Park worked for Booker T Washington and the Tuskegee Institute. He then goes on to suggest that Park's deep interest in issues of race and immigration were manifest in his social theory which was 'one part Simmel, one part Spencer, and one part American pragmatism' (2007: 195). Washington and the Tuskegee Institute, it seems, had no part to play in the development of Park's interest in issues of race and immigration. These minor genealogies of inclusion and exclusion, when located within broader genealogies, reinforce and amplify the silences and absences under consideration here. Lengermann and Niebrugge (2007) in their chapter discussing sociology's relation to social work identify Du Bois's *The Philadelphia Negro* as an *example* of settlement sociology research, but do not include any instance of Black sociology within their table charting the key events in the development and relation of sociology and social work in the US. In this way, while they mention Du Bois, they fail to acknowledge as significant the broader tradition of Black sociology and its contribution to the emergence and development of US sociology. As a consequence, they erroneously – indeed, studiously – suggest that the history of sociology in the US was only white.

The chapter by Calhoun and VanAntwerpen suggests that it was in the 1960s and 1970s that 'women and people of colour entered the discipline in greater numbers ... [and] began to challenge dominant sociological paradigms regarding race and gender' (2007: 377–378). This formulation effaces the long-standing tradition of Black sociology in challenging such dominant paradigms since at least the time of Du Bois and locates the challenge primarily in the entry of African Americans to historically white institutions without reflecting on the history of racial segregation that preceded this and necessitated the separation of historical black and historically white institutions. Similarly, Doug McAdam points to the dramatic changes to traditional disciplinary topics in the 1960s and suggests that this was a consequence of 'the distinctive life experiences of sociologists born immediately before and during the baby boom' (2007: 425). While desegregation may be implicit in such a statement, it is not explicitly addressed as part of the significant historical context within which he locates his discussion. There is

also a disregard of the fact that many of these 'new' topics that he identifies were long-standing 'core' concerns within Black sociology; the 'newness' is only in relation to their significance now within the institutional settings of white sociology. While Wallerstein is more sympathetic to the issues of race within the US, he too, nonetheless, presents a history of white sociology's discovery of its neglect of race as a phenomenon of the 1960s and 1970s. In the process he also elides white sociology with sociology generally and obliterates the long-standing scholarship of Black sociologists from the 19th century onwards as part of the sanctioned history of US sociology.

The chapters by Morris, Winant and Collins narrate a starkly different history of US sociology; a history that acknowledges the importance of race as a political issue and which, if taken seriously, would require a radical revision of most others within the volume. As Patricia Hill Collins argues, 'different versions of a logic of segregation shaped all aspects of American society, including American sociology' and it is necessary to examine the impact of these logics on the practices of sociology from the outset (2007: 576). While, she suggests, sociology was uniquely placed to address directly such logics of segregation – given that 'its very reason for being was to uncover and study the rules of social structure that were invisible in everyday social interaction' (2007: 577) – its embeddedness within those very same structures of segregation also mitigated against this. As Howard Winant writes, race was not viewed as politically important 'except by opponents of the disciplinary consensus, such as WEB DuBois' (2007: 535). Another way of stating this would be to say that race was viewed as politically important except by those who benefitted from its contemporary organization and who, in the process of being professional sociologists and ignoring the reality of the political conditions of their time, 'legitimated the existing social inequalities of class, race, and gender within American society' (Collins, 2007: 581).

As Morris, Winant and Collins discuss, US sociology was forged in a period of racial segregation and scientific racism in which ideas about the inferiority and inferior capacities of African Americans predominated, but which did not go uncontested. Alongside the dominant narratives and paradigms there was a vibrant tradition of sociological thought 'based on carefully collected empirical data and measurement' which, in turn, was contextualized within a history of racial oppression and inequality (Morris, 2007: 510). This tradition, inaugurated by Du Bois and continued by scholars such as E Franklin Frazier, Oliver Cromwell Cox and others, provided a powerful, alternative locus for scholarship on race and inequality. It was a tradition that, as Morris (2007) argues, began with a rejection of the racial inferiority thesis and paid greater attention to the social environment in accounting for contemporary patterns of inequality. It provided an alternative sociology of race and, in so doing, also provided the possibility for an analysis of the way in which sociology itself was embedded within a racial logic of segregation.

Contesting canonical histories of the discipline requires not only highlighting the alternative traditions that were also present at the time in question, but also, as these scholars remind us, using the intellectual resources of these alternative histories to think differently about sociology today. The one other chapter in the volume that does present a desegregated history is the chapter by Michael D Kennedy and Miguel A Centeno discussing global transformations in US sociology. They start their chapter by discussing the ways in which the 'international' has figured, culturally and historically, within US

sociology and further contextualize this within ‘the power and privilege of American sociology in the world’ (2007: 668). They then go on to discuss both the modes of internationalism within the hegemonic form of US sociology and the way in which this has been represented. Where they differ from most other contributors, however, is that they go further to examine the absences from the dominant representations and then discuss the import of what has previously been missed by those accounts. They note, for example, that while ‘the Sumner/Giddings debate about imperialism’ largely reflected European concerns, ‘W. E. B. DuBois clearly signalled a tendency in American sociology to challenge not only white but also Western presumptions’ (2007: 675). With this, they also point to the exclusion of Du Bois from earlier representations of US sociology’s internationalism, address his specific contributions to this in terms of his commitments to pan-Africanism, situate this in the context of broader discussions of US sociology, and rethink what internationalism within US sociology means once we take into account previous absences.

As I will also go on to argue in the next section of this article, the silenced traditions within hegemonic accounts of US sociology provide us with greater resources to begin to rethink otherwise dominant sociological conceptualizations. Here, I examine understandings of emancipation and equality as articulated through one aspect of the African American tradition – the dialogue between Booker T Washington and WEB Du Bois – and discuss how attention to this debate enables us to develop more complex and richer conceptualizations.

III

Emancipation emerges as a key theme within European Enlightenment thought in the Old World at precisely the time that slavery is being instituted in the New. While the intellectual content of emancipation was contrasted to the condition of slavery, the concomitant practice of enslavement by Europeans did not render suspect their political and intellectual pronouncements on the topic (see Kohn, 2005). Both France and the United States, commonly said to be the first modern nations, inscribed a commitment to freedom and liberty in their declarations of independence and documents of rights. Articulated notions of freedom in these societies, however, existed alongside continued practices of colonial domination, enslavement of populations, trade in human beings, and a belief that some had a greater right to be free than others. Freedom, in their terms, while espoused abstractly as a *universal* freedom was, in practice, more circumscribed – its full enjoyment restricted to white, propertied men of some distinction. Subsequent renditions of ‘universal freedom’ as embodied in the Western tradition of freedom similarly maintain a limited, racialized understanding of the concept. Alongside this tradition, however, there has been another tradition which developed a more expansive understanding of the concept. As Nikhil Pal Singh argues, ‘the modern black freedom struggle is as old as the Atlantic slave trade and encompasses a history of resistance, refusal, revolts, and runaways’ (2004: 49). It is to that tradition that I now turn.

The cultural expressions of enslaved peoples in the Americas developed, Foner argues, ‘as a synthesis of African traditions, European elements, and conditions in America’ (2005: 16). Thus, when the Declaration of Independence proclaimed mankind’s

inalienable right to freedom in 1776, this particular rhetoric of liberty was absorbed into the struggles of enslaved peoples against the institution of slavery alongside the instances of revolution and insurrection as embodied in the events in Haiti and the acts of those such as Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner (Davis, 1989; Fordham, 1975). Frederick Douglass, a self-emancipated African American, and leader of the abolitionist movement in the north, was a key spokesperson in the struggle against slavery in the mid-19th century. He, along with others, argued strongly that the abolition of slavery would require both a redefinition of the nation and that social and political freedom must be accompanied by economic opportunity to redress the poverty of African Americans created through two centuries of slavery (see Buccola, 2012; Foner, 2005).

The US Civil War, which began in 1861, did not have emancipation as one of its aims. However, emancipation of enslaved African Americans was one of its outcomes. Not least, as many African Americans seized 'the opportunity presented by the war to escape slavery' (Foner, 2005: 44). Mass, collective self-emancipation forced the hand of the legislators into legalizing the *de facto* actions of African Americans. Legal emancipation was followed by a decade of 'Reconstruction' when attempts were made at 'remaking' the nation along more egalitarian lines, but these attempts foundered as the white Democrats regained power in the southern states and reinstituted forms of disenfranchisement and segregation along racial lines. The broader social context was also one of widespread and systematic violence against African Americans, including lynchings and the establishment of the Ku Klux Klan (see Johnson, 2008). The Jim Crow years of institutionalized violence against African Americans lasted close on a century, from 1876 till 1965, and only came to a formal end with the passing of the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Voting Rights Act (1965) in the 1960s (King, 1995).

While standard histories of Reconstruction laid the blame for its failure to remake the nation on the variously attributed insufficiencies of those who had been freed, Du Bois (1935), in *Black Reconstruction*, argued that its failure, rather, resided in problems associated with the very system of the US itself (see Lemert, 2000). He argued strongly for recognition of the contribution made by African Americans to reconstruct democracy during this period and gave voice to this silenced history. The volume was both a contribution to a more adequate history of the period – an attempt 'to establish Truth, on which Right in the future may be built' (1935: 725) – and a challenge to the racist historiography of earlier accounts; that is, it was an argument for scholars to 'regard the truth as more important than the defence of the white race' (1935: 725). By writing the chief witness of Reconstruction – 'the emancipated slave' – back into the history of the period, Du Bois (1935) did not simply wish to add another narrative to the general history of Reconstruction. He sought to point to this studied absence and, in reconstructing history, also work to reconstruct the nation and democracy (see Singh, 2004). It was against this background of Reconstruction and Jim Crow that the development of African American thought around ideas of emancipation and equality took place. While any starting point can be arbitrary, Booker T Washington and WEB Du Bois provide one of the first instances of recorded public exchange on these issues and serve as founding figures to the subsequent debates.⁸

Booker T Washington was born under slavery in 1856, heard the Emancipation Proclamation read out in 1865, lived through Reconstruction and the violent backlash to

it as embodied in the Jim Crow laws of 1876 and died in 1915 (see Washington, 1945 [1901]). On gaining his freedom, he worked his way through school and, in 1881, became the first head of the Tuskegee Institute. He rose to prominence as a leader of the African American community raising funds for the Tuskegee Institute and for the building of schools in rural African American communities. He was feted for his ability to garner those funds from wealthy white philanthropists and endorsed by those philanthropists for advocating black accommodation to the social realities of segregation (Harlan, 1988). Having lived through the hope of Reconstruction and its systematic dismantling, it is perhaps not surprising that Washington would advocate a gradualist programme for social reform. He believed that as African Americans were greatly outnumbered by whites, the best they could hope for was to build up support among sympathetic whites and to prove themselves worthy of a deferred equality (see Washington, 2007 [1909]). As expressed in what came to be known as his 'Atlanta Compromise' speech of 1895, Washington urged African Americans to improve their current economic conditions through hard work and industry and by acquiring the education necessary for this. He felt that they should sacrifice their desire for immediate social and political equality and that instead of seeking 'a seat in Congress or the state legislature' or being able 'to spend a dollar in the opera house', should look rather to preparing themselves for the eventual exercise of such privileges. 'The wisest among my race', he suggested, 'understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremest folly, and that progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing' (Washington, 1895).

Booker T Washington was perhaps the most renowned of African American leaders in the period after emancipation and probably the last great African American born under slavery. Du Bois himself lauded Washington 'as the one recognised spokesman of his ten million fellows, and one of the most notable figures in a nation of seventy millions' (1997 [1903]: 63). He suggested that while previous leaders from the African American community were likely only to have been known within the community, save Frederick Douglass, Washington 'arose as essentially the leader not of one race but of two – a compromiser between the South, the North, and the Negro' (Du Bois, 1997 [1903]: 67). It was the nature of the compromise, however, that led to criticism coalescing around the alternative figure of Du Bois in the early 20th century and giving renewed impetus to the debates around the meaning of emancipation within African American thought.

While Washington had initially enjoyed a period of leadership largely uncontested by others, this began to change in the early 20th century. The period on from legal emancipation had made it easier for African Americans to gain an education and to organize collectively in the continued struggles for justice and for social, political and economic freedoms. WEB Du Bois's life, for example, had quite a different trajectory to that of Washington and it was in his publicly voiced opposition to Washington that Du Bois himself came to national prominence. Whereas Washington had been born under slavery in the south, Du Bois was born a freeman in the northern state of Massachusetts (see Lewis, 1993). He obtained a classical, liberal arts education at Fisk University, in contrast to Washington's technical education in the south, and then studied at Harvard, becoming the first African American to gain a PhD from that institution. He also spent two years at the University of Berlin, Germany, working on his doctorate. After

graduating, Du Bois initially worked within Black universities and, at the same time, undertook research work for white institutions such as the University of Pennsylvania (Anderson, 1996; Lewis, 1993). His research was focused on the objective barriers to black economic advancement and, initially at least, appeared to converge with the aims of Booker T Washington in this area. However, Du Bois broke with Washington's more accommodationist approach in 1903 with the publication of *The Souls of Black Folk*. This book contained a chapter arguing that despite all the good that Washington had undoubtedly done on behalf of African Americans, he had not adequately dealt with the most crucial issues facing them: the continuing injustices emanating from slavery, the lack of voting and other political privileges, and the psychosocial effects of segregation and the maintenance of racial hierarchies upon African Americans.

Du Bois argues that there are three main implications of Washington's pronouncements: 'first, that the South is justified in its present attitude toward the Negro because of the Negro's degradation; secondly, that the prime cause of the Negro's failure to rise more quickly is his wrong education in the past; and, thirdly, that his future rise depends primarily on his own efforts' (1997 [1903]: 71). Du Bois suggests that each of these 'is a dangerous half-truth' and that the supplementary truths ought not to be lost sight of. First, that slavery and racial prejudice are significant factors in the current position of Negroes; second, that educational institutions for African Americans had to be literally built up from scratch as very few had existed prior to emancipation; and third that while, of course, African Americans had to strive for their positions themselves, the enviroing group needed to encourage and support such striving, and not be an obstacle to it (1997 [1903]: 71). Du Bois further argues that Washington's doctrine had allowed whites to 'shift the burden of the Negro problem to the Negro's shoulders' and enabled them to 'stand aside as critical and rather pessimistic spectators; when in fact the burden belongs to the nation' (1997 [1903]: 72). 'The Negro problem', he argues strongly, is neither the problem of African Americans, nor that of white Americans, rather, the problem of race is correctly located as a problem of the nation, that is, in the social relations between citizens and the problematic construction of a hierarchy of citizenship.

Du Bois urged African Americans to stand with Booker T Washington when he preaches 'Thrift, Patience, and Industrial Training for the masses' (1997 [1903]: 72); but to oppose him unceasingly when he 'apologizes for injustice, ... does not rightly value the privilege and duty of voting, belittles the emasculating effects of caste distinctions, and opposes the higher training and ambition of our brighter minds' (1997 [1903]: 72). He concludes his short chapter by arguing that 'we must strive for the rights which the world accords to men' and then quotes the Founding Fathers' statement: 'That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights' (1997 [1903]: 72). With this, Du Bois inextricably links the struggle for African American emancipation with the impetus behind the founding of the nation itself and in a wider conception of emancipation which includes the realization of substantive equality at its core. Significantly, this also included a commitment to intellectual desegregation and the opening up of classical and liberal arts education to African Americans. Where Washington promoted only vocational education and skills training, Du Bois argued for the importance of African Americans being involved in philosophical and social scientific conversations as part of the project of social regeneration. The piece as a whole sees

Du Bois assert his right, following Douglass, to assimilate to the nation through self-assertion, to become a citizen as a Negro and to expand the meaning of citizenship (and democracy) through such endeavours.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of African American conceptions of emancipation, then, was its expanded definition: from the narrow sense of being a counterfoil to slavery in terms of simple liberation from enslavement, to being regarded as the necessary condition for the fulfilment of one's capacities as a human being. Where emancipation has usually been understood in terms of formal equality (whereby the Jim Crow laws enacting a state of 'separate and equal' were regarded as not incompatible with emancipation), African American conceptions of emancipation emphasized the necessity of broader understandings of equality underpinning the possibilities of emancipation.

IV

The rarity with which scholars such as WEB Du Bois, Charles S Johnson, E Franklin Frazier, or other 'African American Pioneers of Sociology', as Saint-Arnaud (2009) calls them, are presented as core sociological voices within university curricula is a matter of great significance from the point of view of histories of our discipline. However, it is not simply an issue of the presence of African American sociologists, but how sociological concepts have been structured by the absence of an address of African American sociology and its different interpretation of canonical themes. As Katznelson argues, the US academy's failure to incorporate Du Bois as more than an emblem of diversity 'has cost it – that is, us – quite a lot'; in particular, the exclusion of other voices has 'evacuated the substantive gains that distinctive experiences and perspectives can bring' (1999: 469–470; see also Carter and Virdee, 2008). For example, contemporary accounts of inequality tend to assign 'race' and 'ethnicity' to 'ascriptive' identities that remain resistant to the otherwise impersonal processes of modernity. In the current language, they are products of the 'lifeworld' not the 'system'. Yet for much of the period during which these sociological constructions were being formed the European 'system' of modernity was one organized within a wider system of colonial domination, while in the United States, the system was one of slavery, followed by divided labour markets and segregated institutions – including segregated educational institutions. In the standard accounts of the history of sociology, the subject moves from being a 'European' invention to being regarded as an expression of 'American' pragmatic optimism. It is little remarked, however, as noted in the earlier section, that the developing university system in the US was itself a segregated system, with separate institutions for African Americans and whites.

Just as early developments of sociology in the white institutions of the United States were associated with the 'settlement movement' and problems of the urban poor, so sociology developed within the Black colleges as a particularly relevant subject within a curriculum directed at understanding the conditions within which African Americans lived (see Lengermann and Niebrugge, 2007; Reed, 1997). Given the conditions of the time, the research capacity of Black sociology was at least as great as that of its white counterparts – albeit less well resourced and supported. Indeed, Du Bois's study, *The Philadelphia Negro*, can be seen as the first major empirical study within the US using a distinctively sociological approach (Anderson, 1996). That this accolade is more usually

given to Thomas and Znaniecki's *The Polish Peasant*, which was published nearly 20 years after *The Philadelphia Negro*, is symptomatic of a wider problem in accounts of the birth of US sociology discussed in the earlier section. As Anderson and Massey (2001: 3) put it, US sociology did not begin in the University of Chicago in the 1920s, but at the University of Pennsylvania in the 1890s. Du Bois's *Philadelphia Negro*, they continue, 'anticipated in every way the program of theory and research that later became known as the Chicago School' (2001: 4). As Bracey, Meier and Rudwick had earlier argued, it is ironic that while Du Bois 'was part of the mainstream of American sociology as the discipline was emerging at the turn of the century', he should then find himself 'relegated to the periphery of the profession' (1973: 9).

The development of a Black sociology separate from what came to be considered the mainstream is significant in the light of Gunnar Myrdal's (1944) commissioned study, *An American Dilemma*. Myrdal, a Swede, was asked to look at the unequal position of African Americans in the USA. Evidently, it was too problematic to ask local scholars to conduct the study, but it was, in all crucial respects, a co-production of Myrdal and the team of largely Black investigators – including Ralph Bunche and Kenneth B Clark, among others. In *An American Dilemma*, Myrdal treated the problem of inequality in the US as a problem of values and argued that 'the American creed' would ultimately require and sanction the assimilation of African Americans. In this way, Myrdal posited the gradual dissolution of 'the Negro Problem' through the institutionalization of the democratic values of the American creed, that is, the values of liberty, justice and fair treatment. However, as Ellison argued at the time, 'aside from implying that Negro culture is not also American', Myrdal assumed that African Americans 'should desire nothing better than what whites consider highest' (1973 [1944]: 94). In addition, there was little discussion of the fact that this creed had been defined independently of the African American experience and in direct contrast to that experience. What was needed, instead, Ellison argued, was 'not an exchange of pathologies, but a change of the basis of society' and that this was a job that needed to be performed together (1973 [1944]: 95).

For the most part, however, the traditions of white sociology continued to treat the issue of inequality in terms of racially constituted difference within the hierarchies of scientific racism (see Frazier, 1947; Turner, 1978). These sociological theories were, as Frazier suggests, 'merely rationalisations of the existing racial situation' (1947: 268). Even Myrdal, for example, identified the problems of inequality faced by African Americans as 'the Negro Problem', not as the problem of inequality, or the problem of the way in which white Americans treated African Americans. The pathologization of the victims of inequality continued with the Moynihan Report published two decades later and can still be seen in sociological work today where the 'war on poverty' has turned into the 'war on the poor'. In opposition to such a framing, the 'segregated scholars', as Francille Rusan Wilson (2006) calls them, of the Black colleges and universities had sought a structural account of inequality in terms of socioeconomic position and the uneven development of US capitalism. The white approach, then, sought to universalize racial difference, while the Black approach sought to deconstruct racial difference in terms of a different universalizing tendency, that of class analysis (see Harris, 1989; Robinson, 1983).

If subsequent developments within white sociology came to repudiate the scientific racism of the early years, one dominant strand was then to argue that race did not matter at all. In this argument, the inequalities assigned to race are 'reduced' to the operation of 'class' processes (whether of the standard form in occupational status attainment approaches or in the neo-Marxist challenge to those processes by writers such as Erik Olin Wright). According to this approach, when class (or socioeconomic) differences are properly understood, what appears to be the outcome of discriminatory racial processes is the operation of more significant class processes (Roediger, 1999). This shift in understanding within mainstream sociology took place at a time when the Black scholars – who had initially conceived the problem of racialized difference in terms of inequalities in the labour market – were moving from class analysis to Black consciousness. While they had argued consistently that 'class' could transcend the particularism of 'race', white workers had preferred their racialized, or 'caste', advantages in the workplace and these advantages were then institutionalized through New Deal enactments and the dual labour markets of the emerging Fordist regime (Cox, 1970 [1948]; Roediger, 1999). Black consciousness was, in part, but not only, a response to this failure in solidarity (Carmichael and Hamilton, 1969).

The distinctiveness of class and race was upheld by white sociology just at the time that Black sociology was arguing that their integration could be part of a broader-based claim for social justice. When Black sociology and the wider current of Black thought and activism moved to the distinctiveness of racial processes and the need for specific agitation to address the injustices emanating from such processes, white sociology argued for an integrated approach based on class. However, the echo of the earlier position remained in the lament that, with the new emphasis on race within Black sociology and the attention given to other forms of ethnic discrimination, the white working class had been neglected. Here, the 'lost privileges' of whiteness appear to dominate over a unified class approach. The two sociologies thus remained at odds with each other.

V

Neglected in their day, the African American pioneers of sociology rightfully belong in the canon, but simply being brought into the canon would not address the problems I have identified in this article. As such, I want to conclude by suggesting something different. Historical issues of enslavement and colonial domination continue to structure contemporary sociological discourse in ways acknowledged by those pioneers, such that their being brought into the canon should be the occasion for us to reconsider present sociological understandings and not just the scale and scope of past contributions. The usual response to such exclusions – a response to which sociology is peculiarly prone – is to argue for plural approaches and multiple traditions. In this way, it is suggested, sociology can accommodate different voices through an expanded and expansive canon. It can never be an adequate response, however, simply to include alternative voices, which continue to be ordered around dominant voices, without questioning why these new additions were initially excluded or what is the basis of their continued subordination.

Simple inclusion without reconstruction based on an acknowledgement of the difference that inclusion makes is an inadequate response to the problems outlined above. It is

inadequate precisely because, as I argued at the start of the article, that is how the contributions of Black sociology come to be defined as being about race, rather than about sociology and the broader politics of knowledge production. Just as feminists have argued that the 'objectivity' of sociological knowledge can disguise a male subjectivity, so other claims to 'objectivity' or 'recognition in diversity' of 'strong objectivity' (or however current epistemologies are framed, see Harding, 1991) can also embody racialized epistemologies.

Instead, the central issue is the need to understand the mutual entailment of what are presented as separate histories and the disciplinary inadequacies that are consequent to their presentation as separate. While there may be two traditions of sociology (of course, there are more), it is not correct to suggest that they developed in parallel and without connection. Their very separation is based on mutually constituting histories of enslavement and segregation. A desegregated history of US sociology needs to take seriously the processes by way of which these traditions both came to be separate and to be presented as separate. It needs to recognize the connections of enslavement, dispossession and segregation as constitutive of the very formation of *two* traditions and of the hierarchical ordering of the relations between those traditions. It further needs to acknowledge that the Black tradition always engaged with and responded to developments in what was understood as the mainstream. It was engagement in the other direction that was much less frequent and that gave substance to the later claim suggesting two separate traditions. This is precisely the functioning of the veil about which Du Bois (1997 [1903]) wrote at the turn of the 20th century and, it seems, rests between us still. This double subordination of the achievements of Black sociology and of the connections between the traditions is what is missing in ideal-typical depictions of US sociology as presented in standard histories of the discipline. Not to recognize the ways in which the legacies of histories of racism continue to determine contemporary sociological endeavours is potentially to perpetuate those histories in the present and to undermine the more extensive contributions that have been made by sociologists to inclusive projects of social justice. The challenge of reconstruction, then, is to think a common project of sociology, and social justice, differently.

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Notes

1. It is worth noting here that while de Tocqueville's (2000 [1835]) classic study, *Democracy in America*, is seen by many as providing a comparative sociology of the institutions of democracy and freedom in the United States and Europe, it also points to issues of coloniality within the US that require consideration. For example, de Tocqueville interrogates the institution of

- US democracy from the perspective of the two races usually excluded from its functioning: 'the Indians and the Negroes'. He clearly states that the land of the US is occupied by *three* races and that his account of democracy is about only one of them because the history of the other two is of their subjugation by the very institutions and practices that are otherwise being praised. While scholars and others usually remember de Tocqueville's capturing of the essential spirit of US democracy, they very often neglect his powerful critique of its contradiction in refusing its own universalization and thus perpetuating colonial modes of governance (see Bhambra and Margree, 2010).
2. This mirrors a difference noticed by de Tocqueville (2000 [1835]) and largely ignored since in mainstream social science. The forced transportation and enslavement of Africans placed them outside the various institutional structures of white settlement otherwise valorized in accounts of the Constitution, while the dispossession of indigenous peoples left them also outside those structures and antagonistic to inclusion. As de Tocqueville put it, one group wished for inclusion but was denied it; the other did not wish inclusion and was subjugated.
 3. The African American tradition of sociology is not a homogeneous one and there were, of course, significant differences among African American sociologists on the particular issues with which they were concerned (see Saint-Arnaud, 2009; Wilson, 2006).
 4. For an examination of the institutional relationship between race, dispossession, enslavement and the establishment of US universities, see Craig Steven Wilder (2013); see also Allen et al. (2007).
 5. The concern that the establishment of Black studies, separate from Departments of Sociology and History and so forth, would mean the segregation of understandings of race and of the considerations of experiences of African Americans and others, was something that CLR James, already in 1969, was cautioning against (1984 [1969]).
 6. See King and Smith (2005) for an earlier, parallel argument in the field of American political development and Vitalis (2005) discussing similar issues in International Relations.
 7. While a couple of chapters mention the work of WEB Du Bois, it is always as an individual exception. There is little discussion of the tradition of Black sociology of which he was a part and the relationship of that tradition to the dominant narratives that are otherwise presented. Further, there is limited acknowledgement of the contribution made by Du Bois to the politics of his time, for example, through his organization and involvement in the Niagara Movement, the NAACP and the pan-African Congresses (see Morris, 2007). A more recent volume, edited by George Steinmetz (2013) and addressing the imperial entanglements of sociology and empire, similarly neglects to consider the imperial histories of dispossession and enslavement that constitute conditions within which US sociology itself emerged.
 8. This is not to suggest that they were the only ones to have discussed such issues. On the contribution by Marcus Garvey, for example, to discussions of sovereignty, see Shilliam (2006).

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Résumé

Sur le plan historique, la sociologie étatsunienne est un exemple de ségrégation en ce que jusque dans les années 60, il existait deux traditions distinctes de pensée sociologique organisées sur le plan institutionnel – une tradition noire et une tradition blanche. Dans l’ensemble toutefois, les historiographies dominantes ne font pas mention de la ségrégation et, au mieux, la reproduisent quand elles traitent de la tradition sociologique étatsunienne. Ceci est manifeste dans la rareté avec laquelle des érudits tels que WEB Du Bois, E Franklin Frazier, Oliver Cromwell Cox et d’autres que Saint-Arnaud désigne sous le nom de « pionniers de la sociologie afro-américaine » sont présentés en tant que voix sociologiques clés dans les histoires de la discipline. Dans cet article, j’aborde le problème de l’absence de sociologues afro-américains dans le canon sociologique étatsunien et j’analyse également les implications de cette absence sur notre compréhension de concepts sociologiques fondamentaux. À ce dernier égard, je me concentre en particulier sur les débats sur l’égalité et l’émancipation et examine les moyens par lesquels notre compréhension de ces concepts pourrait être élargie en prenant en ligne de compte les travaux de sociologues afro-américains et la manière différente dont ils interprètent des thèmes centraux.

Mots-clés

Booker T Washington, colonialisme de peuplement, WEB Du Bois, épistémologie, racisme, ségrégation, sociologie étatsunienne

Resumen

La sociología estadounidense ha sido segregada históricamente porque, al menos hasta los años 60, había dos tradiciones de pensamiento sociológico organizadas institucionalmente en forma diferente: una negra y una blanca. En su mayor parte, sin embargo, las historiografías predominantes han guardado silencio sobre esta segregación y, a lo sumo, la reproduce cuando se refiere a la tradición sociológica

estadounidense. Esto es evidente en la singularidad con la que estudiosos como WEB Du Bois, E Franklin Frazier, Oliver Cromwell Cox, y otros 'pioneros afro-americanos de la sociología', como Saint-Arnaud los llama, se presentan como voces sociológicas centrales dentro de las historias de la disciplina. En este artículo, me refiero a la ausencia de sociólogos afro-americanos del canon sociológico estadounidense y, además, analizo las implicancias de esta ausencia para nuestra comprensión de conceptos sociológicos fundamentales. Con respecto a esto último, hago particular hincapié en los debates sobre igualdad y emancipación y en analizar la manera en que nuestra comprensión de estos conceptos podría ampliarse al considerar el trabajo de los sociólogos afro-americanos y sus diferentes interpretaciones de temas centrales.

Palabras clave

Booker T Washington, colonialismo de repoblamiento, WEB Du Bois, epistemología, racismo, segregación, sociología estadounidense